

USURPATIONS

OF THE

CHURCH OF ROME

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P R E F A C E.

The object of the following pages is to exhibit in a summary way the circumstances which led to the Usurpation of the Church of Rome; and to trace the steps by which the establishment of this usurped authority was accomplished.

To those who have investigated the subject in the original authorities, this little treatise would be altogether unnecessary; but as few are disposed to seek for this information through the voluminous pages of Ecclesiastical History, ~~the~~ present sketch, it was deemed, might prove acceptable.

We endeavour here to shew, that the right of private judgment in religious matters was a privilege asserted by the early Church, and which never was disputed until the Church of Rome assumed her usurped authority: ~~this~~, placing the truths of a rational religion on the footing of the most absurd, by requiring our assent to it on principles of compulsion, not of reason and choice.

To seek to convince the supporters of such a system of the absurdity of it, would be a useless task: the character which Plato gives of the Sophists, applies with peculiar force to those theologians: "When they are discussing a question they care not how the sub-

“ject they are treating really stands, but only consider
“how the positions they themselves lay down, may
“be made to appear true to the mob which surrounds
“them.”

If a sect (thus professing maxims of unqualified despotism, in the very face of its clamours for liberality, should attain to political power, how dreadful would be the bonds in which we should be fettered ! Watched with a jealousy, the result of past experience, the human mind could scarcely hope again to free itself. Its tyrants dreading to relax their oppression could rely only on the strictness and perseverance of their vigilance for repressing the attempt once more to emancipate itself, and crush for ever so dreadful so intolerable a despotism.

But we trust the privileges we now enjoy will not be lightly risked, or *power* granted under the name of religious toleration to those, who themselves, with true Jesuitical inconsistency deny the right they claim.

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NOTHING, perhaps, has contributed more to uphold the Church of Rome, than the bold assumption of being the representative of the universal church, and the boasted regularity of the succession of her pontiffs.* The imposing attitude which the former claim gives her, and in which she is without a competitor, serves as a sort of *prima facie* evidence in her favor; while the latter confers a unity of character which pleases by its simplicity.

How false the previous *position* is, a reference to history will determine. How untenable the *principle*, we shall endeavour to shew in its application to secular governments. Of these there are essentially but two kinds: those which derive their authority from the governed; and those which derive it from the principle of force, against that authority. With the latter we have nothing to do, we presume: such government is an open, avowed despotism.

* The succession of bishops, in all the principal churches of the first centuries, is given by Eusebius. If, in latter ages, this succession has been continued more especially to the Church of Rome, the cause is obvious: after her usurpation it is preserved in the line of her bishops as temporal princes, not as fellow-pastors with their brethren in the Church of Christ.

The former admits of two modifications; alike in principle, but very different in form: those of republicanism, and of constitutional monarchy. The republican form of government is the most artificial of these, and yet is perhaps rather the result of accident in the earliest stage than of design: the loss of its natural head, or excessive abuse of the power with which the patriarch or chief was invested, alone would be like to induce a society to assume this form, and not even under these circumstances permanently, until experience had taught it to reflect on government as a science.

Constitutional monarchy has, in all probability, its foundation in patriarchal government; in the clans and chiefries of modern times. Mutual interests and mutual confidence were its basis. This good understanding could not be perpetual; the love of power, the love of license, so natural to man, must produce occasional deviations from this path of *undefined* duty and harmony. General principles would first become recognized: general maxims would consequently follow. Specific regulations would afterwards be adopted, and general customs, general maxims, receive the precision as well as the force of laws. Such are, perhaps, the foundation of the firmest bulwarks of liberty. Time alone, however, could perfect a work to be equally applicable to the various stages of society, experience alone, by reflection on the past, provide against the contingencies of the future, and embrace all the principles of order and of freedom in a CHARTER.

Now if in a republic a citizen usurp that authority over his fellow-citizens which they alone had a right to confer, does his possession of this authority legalize the crime, or render the execution of his children legitimate? Or, if in a constitutional monarchy, one, not the heir to the throne, comes in by force; or if the true heir depart from the principles of that constitution; are we to recognize in the one, or in the descendants of the other, a legitimate sovereign, and except of a genealogical tablet in lieu of our violated liberties? By either of these rules we are willing to examine the claims of the Church of Rome.

While Jesus Christ was upon earth, he was indeed the lord and head of the Christian Church; when that head was visibly removed, unless he clearly and unequivocally appointed a successor, that church became an universal republic. Such it unequivocally was during the first ages of Christianity, nor did the Apostles themselves claim any pre-eminence, save that which the Holy Spirit conferred upon them, and which was willingly conceded them by others; and where the Holy Spirit was poured out with equal measure upon others, it gave them equal dignity with the very chief of the Apostles.

But if the Church of Rome claim a supremacy over other churches on the score of legitimate succession; then it follows, that the appointment of that successor should be proved by charter, and if the appointment itself appears equivocal, that the practice of the Church in the pursuance of such appointment should be adduced in proof thereof, and satisfactory evidence given of adherence to the principles and letters of that charter, which alone could constitute legitimate succession in the Church.

For it cannot be questioned that the Christian Church is founded upon the charter of the New Testament, and in examining the claims of any particular branch of this Church, to the charter we have a right to refer. This written declaration supersedes all oral laws, not having the authority of ancient prescription and universal reception: such we may consider the general law of morality, which the christian charter amplifies does not abrogate.

But this charter the Church of Rome will not submit to be judged by. This is good policy, but bad principle. This church claims the right of judging the charter, and does not admit the duty of being regulated by it. On what grounds can this claim be made? On that of tradition. Yet how can this be? Unproved documents surely cannot be received in proof of disputed rights. The charter is acknowledged on all sides, and is therefore the only recognized ground of judgment. Suppose for a moment, we admitted traditions:

some of these are acknowledged to be false. How then are we to distinguish between the false and the true? By the testimony of authors. But such testimony is not infallible, and therefore makes nothing for our purpose: fallible evidence cannot avail to establish infallibility.

The claim of the Church of Rome is founded in two texts of Scripture: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church," and again: "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." With respect to the first of these texts, we conceive it, by the connection of its context, to be capable of an easy, a rational, and, we will add, an indisputable solution. Our Lord asks his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" They replied, "Some Moses, and some Elias, and some one of the Prophets." "But," continued our Lord, "whom say ye, that I am?" and Simon Peter answered and said: "'Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;" and Jesus answered, and said unto him, "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." How will any person say, that this revelation by the Father of his Son is not a rock of certainty that admits of no dispute? "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," &c. &c. Upon what rock? Upon the rock of the revelation of the Father, on the rock of confessing, Jesus to be the Christ: or on the rock of a poor, fallible, though honest hearted man: which of these three should be preferred?

Saint Augustine thus expresses himself upon this passage: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock which thou hast confessed, upon this rock which thou hast known, saying, 'Thou art Christ the Son of the living God, will I build my Church; for the rock was Christ.'" With this conclusion of Saint Augustine we perfectly agree, premising only that such confession of Christ be understood as proceeding from the revelation of the Father, that is, by the Holy Spirit; for "no man can call Jesus Lord, truly, but by the Holy Ghost." But the conclusion that Peter was that rock we cannot come to.

For independent of our decision on the above passage, and its unison with that of St. Augustine, no reference whatever appears to have been made by the other Apostles as to the point of union of the Church being in Peter, nor does Peter himself ever seem to have entertained such an idea; he neither exercised precedence or claimed infallibility. Neither was it promised to any Church: the most steadfast was cautioned to take heed lest it should fall; and the only safety for any Church was in humility, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. If any church imagined itself rich, the language of the Spirit to it was, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire:"—If any wrapped up in its own righteousness, it was counselled to buy of Jesus Christ "white raiment that it might be clothed." No person will pretend this was material gold or material raiment; but confess that it was spiritual gold that comes pure and more pure out of the furnace of tribulation, and *that* spiritual raiment which is the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

The promise of Christ, made to his disciples after his resurrection, "Lo! I am with you always even to the end of the world," can only be received as a pledge to those who, professing to be his disciples, possessed true and living faith in Him, as did the apostles, not to any one particular Church or congregation, for we have abundant evidence that once such Church presumed in its own purity, then did its stability in the truth become wavering, and the danger of its candlestick being removed out of its place imminent. — Now does any Church presume to the same extent as the Church of Rome? Or will any person pretend conscientiously to declare that the Church of Rome has been that humble, meek, pure Church which a true Church ought, and which **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST** must be?

In continuation of the claim to supremacy in the Church of Rome, it was necessary to connect the promise made to Peter with this city. He is accordingly asserted, upon what authority we shall hereafter see, to have been bishop of Rome. The principal ground for the supposition of St. Peter being

bishop of Rome appears to have been drawn from the circumstance of one of his epistles being dated from Babylon ;* which Eusebius† thinks was a designation bestowed, of course in the spirit of prophecy, on Rome, for we know that otherwise it would be absurd. This opinion of Eusebius St. Jerome supports by powerful arguments. Thus if we admit that St. Peter did reside in Rome, we have equal authority for believing, that he applied to that city the appellation of "Mystery Babylon," and truly the concession required makes little in favour of the claims of the Roman Church.

It was, indeed, the opinion of several of the fathers that St. Peter suffered martyrdom at Rome, with St. Paul, whom all authors agree was beheaded in that city. But how uncertain opinion must be in such cases will appear when the very same authority, which favours his residence at Rome, doubts the authenticity of his second epistle. The Gospel, according to St. Mark is stated by many of the fathers to have been written at Rome, at the request of the christians residing there. Mark was the disciple of St. Peter and was supposed to have written it immediately under this apostles direction: yet, notwithstanding our particular information thus far no account is transmitted us of the circumstances of his martyrdom, of any authenticity: the very time is unknown: nor had the Church for a long period decided who was St. Peter's successor in the see of Rome; a decision which was the result rather of reflection or convenience when the fact itself was obscured or lost in the lapse of time. So late as the fifth century St. John Chrysostom terms the bishop of Antioch the successor of St. Peter.

But admitting that St. Peter may have been bishop of Rome, though we are decided in our opinion that he never was so, it at least behoves those claiming rights as his successors to shew that their claims extend no further than those made or exercised by him. It would likewise be but reasonable to fix the period when the authority claimed for Peter was vested in him; and it should be proved at what period he became

the standard of orthodoxy. He did not become so previous to St. Paul's conversion is certain; for, this apostle detected Peter weakly betraying the principles of the Gospel in deference to the prejudices of Judaism, from the fetters of which miracles were inadequate to free him. Now if Peter had introduced circumcision into the Church of Rome, would it follow that the Universal Church should adopt an error that, as the apostle of the Gentiles said, would render the grace of God of none effect? Our argument then comes to this, that if St. Peter were not infallible, neither could his successors be: and that if infallibility belong to any body of christians it must belong to the Universal Church and not to the Church of Rome, to a whole not to a part. But we deny Peter's being bishop of Rome—we deny his infallibility—we deny the right of any one Church to assume a precedence over any other without its consent—we deny the Church of Rome to be the Catholic Church—and we deny the succession of its pontiffs to be legitimate. In support of those views we shall take a survey of the Christian Church from the earlier period of its establishment.

Of all the systems of religion or philosophy ever proposed to the world, none was comparable in the purity of its doctrines and the rationality of its principles to that of christianity; yet never perhaps was there one more perverted from its original simplicity, or proposed at subsequent periods in forms more absurd. The vanity of life is a theme that has been dwelt on from the foundation of the world through every generation of men, and is a truth equally recognized by the sage and by the savage. The beauty of virtue has captivated the imagination and engaged the pencil of the most splendid names of antiquity; nor are we to suppose that thousands who were unskilled to express themselves, adored with less sincerity in their silence.

Notwithstanding the prejudices which existed in the church, even in the earlier ages of it, the most learned of the Fathers do not hesitate to acknowledge that some of the heathen were acquainted with the true God. In the eleventh book

of his "Evangelical Preparations," Eusebius demonstrates that the doctrine of Plato is agreeable to that of Moses, though he would have us believe that this coincidence is derived from his acquaintance with the books of the Old Testament. For our parts we are rather inclined to attribute any similarity of views to the enlightening influence of some universal principle, which had a tendency to unite the minds of unprejudiced and enquiring men towards the same centre of truth. How weak this influence was, we may perhaps admit, compared with the revelation of truth in the Gospel; but perhaps we should rather be disposed to admire that contemplative disposition of mind, which, undeterred by the prejudices of heathen superstition, could, aloof from its absurdities, penetrate so far into the sacred arcana as to confess the blindness which could see no further, for such is the natural consequences of a glimpse of the truth, and anticipate a Messiah to conduct us into a more perfect knowledge of God. Such views are attributed to Plato, and there is no reason to doubt that those sentiments were more extended than to the limits of a sect.

In the fifth century St. Augustine also ascribes to the Platonists the knowledge of the true God; others do not scruple to extend it to the Pythagoreans. The Fathers of the Church, however, condemn the addresses of those sects to Demons as *Mediolors*, and St. Augustine refuses to admit this title even to Angels, affirming that it belonged to Jesus Christ alone. He endeavours to prove that all demons are devils, but this is a mere dispute about words; the heathen certainly did not so understand the matter, they had their good and their evil demons, as Christians have, or express themselves of, good and evil angels, angels of light, and angels of darkness, protecting angels, and fallen angels.

That the heathen were very remote from the attainment of that knowledge of God contained in the Gospel is indisputable, yet their error with respect to worshiping demons does

²¹ "It is difficult," says this Philosopher, "to attain to, and dangerous to publish
the knowledge of the true God."

not appear to have been far removed from our worshiping of angels,* and for all we know they had their "latria" and their "dulia," to distinguish the nature of the reverence paid to these demons, from that which they paid to the Supreme Being, in whom alone they acknowledged the power of forgiving sins. The readiness with which the Gentiles received the gospel, the unbelief of the Jews who, witnesses of the miracles of our Lord, generally rejected it, argues much in favour of their disposition to admit *their* blindness, while the contrary feeling of presumption in the Pharisees and the Sadducee confirmed them in their sin. "If they acknowledged themselves blind they had not had sin," but as they asserted they saw, therefore they were accountable for the guilt. In fine, the whole New Testament seems to be one continued denunciation against spiritual pride and presumption, and we cannot think the lessons against these crimes, addressed to the Pharisee or the Sadducee, have in the least degree lost their virtue in the present day.

As we have referred to the superstitions of the heathen, we may here express an opinion not hastily adopted, that however obscured by the priest or perverted by the poet, the beautiful fabric of Grecian mythology had its origin in truth; and its application to the doctrines of Christianity itself, is illustrated in the pages of one of the most instructive and fascinating of human productions, the *Telemachus* of Fenelon. Whether the facility with which this mythology admitted the gods to assume human form, could tend to reconcile them the more readily to the doctrine of the incarnation, we shall not pretend to determine, nor is it the purpose of these pages to enter on the enquiry†: but we are apprehensive that many of those who embraced Christianity, while the mere profession of the name, and the rite of baptism sufficed for this purpose, brought minds into the church

* A practice sanctioned by the Romish Church.

† We were not aware, when we wrote this, that the same idea had occurred to the Historian.

better prepared to refine the Gospel away in questions of theology, than by submission to its dictates experience purification of heart. To enter on but a sketch of the theological controversies which agitated and disgraced the church, would be as unpleasant as it would be an unprofitable task. The errors of the Gnostics were scarcely more reprehensible than the disgusting discussions of the professed orthodox: but while the noisy babblers of the various opinions of the day were administering to their own vanity in the extension of their peculiar doctrines, some of the churches pursued the peaceful tenor of their way, in the simplicity of that truth which they had received from the unpolluted hands of the Apostles; and in the second century the Church of Jerusalem could boast, that she had remained to that period an unpolluted virgin.

To a certain extent this boast of the Church of Jerusalem was perhaps well founded; but how tenaciously the prejudices of the disciples of Moses were of their rites, will appear from the testimony of Eusebius, that the first fifteen bishops of this see were all circumcised Jews. This church however, and not the Church of Rome, was long considered as the standard of orthodoxy, and to it remote churches referred in cases of doubt for its decision. But when the Gentiles began to flock into the fold of Christianity, the philosophy of the Greeks, and the paganism of the barbarians, inclined at length the doubtful scale against the church of the Nazarenes and the rite of circumcision. Nor was this sufficient. This church, which had been revered as a parent, had yet to experience further humiliation. The tolerance granted to the laws of Moses was about to expire in the Christian Church; and when the believing Jews, overwhelmed by their misfortunes in the ruin of their country, had to seek an asylum beyond the walls of Jerusalem, their sorrows were brought to a climax in their rejection from the more orthodox communion of the churches of the Gentiles.

In the first ages of Christianity, notwithstanding the various prejudices which may have been introduced by its con-

verts, much simplicity existed in the faith of the believers. No creed was framed by the Apostles;* but the purity of that called by their name, shews it to have been adopted at a very early era of the church. Succeeding ages multiplied the articles deemed requisite to our belief, till at length the simplicity of faith merged into the doctrine of the infallibility of one particular church, and the duty of bowing implicitly to all its decrees.

The character we have ascribed to the Apostles' Creed, so called, we cannot extend to the Apostles' Canons, or to the Constitutions to which their name is prostituted. The progress of the church's errors may be traced in those compositions. In the first of the canons it is decreed, "That a bishop should not be ordained but by two or three bishops," though, in the days of the Apostles, no such rule existed. In the fourth, "That oil and incense should be offered on the altar," when no such things were offered in the days of the Apostles. In the 34th and 35th the "Rights of metropolitans" are treated of, when no such rights existed; and the names of "altars and sacrifices" introduced, when no such things were in use.†

Of the Apostolic Constitutions a few specimens will suffice. In the first book it is declared, "That the beards of women ought to be shaved, but not those of men." Again, "That female slaves may suffer themselves to be deflowered by their masters." In book second, "That the bishops preside over kings and magistrates." We shall forbear to pursue such impious, such disgusting absurdities, to which the purity of the Gospel has been too long obnoxious, and shall proceed to notice a few less culpable though objectionable peculiarities.

An unreasonable abhorrence of the customs, manners, and amusements of the unconverted was indulged in by the faithful, and the celebration of those festival days, common to every people, branded as idolatry and profanation. The use

* Du Pin's Eccles. Hist. vol. 1, p. 37.

† *Ibid.* p. 42.

of gold or silver vessels, of foreign wines, and the indulgence of the bath, were prohibited: the eating *white* bread or wear-garments *other than white*, were likewise proscribed; while the practice of shaving was held to be "an impious attempt to improve the work of the Creator." Less excuseable was the reprobation of the institution of marriage, which was stigmatized though tolerated. How a respect for the works of the Creator so fastidious as the former of those prohibitions affects, could be united with the abhorrence of His most sacred institution, may excite some surprise: but it must also be admitted, that the general motives of the conjugal union are not always in unison with our ideas of delicacy much less of sanctity. That a hallowed character may attach to it we cannot doubt. That the ceremony itself confers it may with equal certainty be denied. Theologically, the love of the individual or the love of the sex is the only line of demarcation we can draw; the ceremony is a duty we owe to the order of civil society.

But whatever the peculiarities of the primitive christian, he demonstrated the sincerity of his faith by the sacrifices he was willing to make to it, and its efficacy by the fruit it produced. He was distinguished by meekness, humility, and patience; mutual charity and confidence prevailed, and the Church, on the whole, presented a beautiful picture of harmony and brotherly love.*

In the first century, the most perfect equality reigned among the individuals of each particular congregation, and independance was the undisputed privilege of every Church. The bonds of a mutual faith, of a reciprocal charity, were those alone which they acknowledged, or to which they were subjected. The bishop was only the first of the flock, appointed by them, and for their benefit.

But the love of power and of influence is so natural to man, that those virtues which served as the highest recommendation to the office of bishop or of presbyter were but

* Decline & Fall, Vol. 2, p. 216.

† Macleay.

too soon exchanged for the ambition of precedence or more sordid love of gain. The unauthorised restrictions affected by the Church, gradually, as might have been anticipated, relaxed, and the contempt of the honours and the pleasures of the world, which at first prevailed, now sought an equivalent for the sacrifice within the orthodox pale of the Christian Republic. The respect which had once been paid to the virtues of the bishop, became by an easy gradation transferred to the dignity of the See, and prepared the way for that period, when intrigue and violence were to be the heralds to the pastoral office, and overpower the recommendations of a blameless life and unspotted integrity.

Thus, the **FIRST** step was taken in the scale of spiritual ambition. The basis of that equality which had existed in each particular Church was destroyed; and the term of bishop, or presbyter, no longer implied an officer recommended, by his sanctity or his age, to the notice and appointment of his equals, as a suitable superintendant of the Church. The independence of the separate Churches continued notwithstanding to be maintained, perhaps with greater jealousy than, when strangers to ambition, the presbyters sought the benefit and assistance to be derived from their mutual counsels. This state of equality could not last. Once the sentiment of ambition becomes the ruling principle, subordination to one supreme head is a desirable and therefore a natural consequence. In the Provincial Synod the most influential pastor was called on to preside, and the title of bishop soon appears to have been specially, if not exclusively, claimed by this head, while the term of presbyter was bestowed on humbler brethren; the terms, however, appear to have been in their original nearly synonymous. Thus, Episcopal Power by degrees raised its head, each local pastor submitting to the authority of his provincial, while these again were obliged to submit to the overbearing influence of the metropolis.

Already in the **SECOND** century the Bishops of Rome began to pretend to a superiority over their fellows: but these pre-

tensions met with a speedy check from the authority of the most revered of the Church's guardians. The conduct of Anicetus was censured and resisted by Polycarp, the disciple of the beloved apostle John;* and Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, with his brethren of the French Church, rejected the pretensions of Victor, spurned his traditions, and sharply reproved him for the conduct he was pursuing.†

The bishop of Ephesus, Polycrates, opposed the same Victor in the beginning of the THIRD century, about the observance of times, meats, drinks, and vestures, and was supported in this opposition by the Asiatic Churches. The Romish Historians confess that Polycrates had the authority of the Primitive Church and of the beloved Apostle on his side. In the same century St. Basil, bishop of Cesarea in Cappadocia, St. Gregory Nazianzenus, and Gregory bishop of Nyssa, protested against the pride and pretended supremacy of the Bishops of Rome. Pamphilus also bishop of Cesarea, a name of great authority, and highly extolled by the Romish Historians, wrote specially against the bishop of Rome's assumed supremacy, the worship of images, and injunctions for fasting.

As a climax, we shall close our account of the supporters of the rights of the Church, against the claims of the Bishop of Rome, with the authority of Athanasius, a name too great to need eulogy, and the holiness of whose character has been borne testimony to by the Romish historians.

This celebrated man wrote freely against the admission of traditions, the invocation of saints, the introduction of the seven sacraments, and against the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome.‡

Yet this very Athanasius, with many of those whose names we have before introduced, received canonization at the hands of the bishop of Rome, a masterly stroke of policy we must

* Irenæus, lib. ad. Hæc. c. 2. It may be proper here to observe that Polycarp was the recognized Metropolitan of all Asia, and Prince of its Churches. "Princeps electurum Asiae."

† Eusebius, lib. 6, cap. 23, 24. — ‡ Orat. 2. Contra Arianos.

admit, but that cannot conceal from the enquiring eye the palpable usurpation of the Church of Rome.

The following charges were made against the heretics of this century: Overthrowing the rule of faith—Perverting the simplicity of the faith taught in the Holy Scriptures.*

In this century, also, the pacific principle so prevailed, that the faithful would “suffer themselves to be killed rather than kill others.”† At this era of the Church the *Mass* was unknown,

In the **FOURTH** century, the corruptions which had been creeping in for some time previous, rushed in as a flood; and the imperial hypocrite, Constantine, completed the pollution of the Roman Church, or, at least, removed all those barriers which tended to keep out corruption, which from this period flowed in without even an exertion to repel it. The love of peace, which was the peculiar characteristic of the Christian, who but a few short years before would sacrifice his own life rather than take the life of his enemy, now rushed to the combat nor questioned its justice, proud to follow an emperor who professed to protect his interests and to favor his creed.

The consequence of this change in their political conduct may be traced in that which was henceforward pursued in the affairs of the church. At the election of Damasus to the see of Rome, such were the feelings which had superseded those we have described as prevailing in the previous century, such the demoniacal passions of ambition and hatred with which they were governed, that the blood of one hundred and thirty victims is recorded to have stained the very altar and temple of their worship.‡

In the **FIFTH** century, the Bishops of Rome continued their attempts, as opportunity offered, to establish their authority over others;—but these attempts were repelled. Hilarius, Bishop of Arles, denied his supremacy or authority over other churches, and proceeding to Rome withstood Leo,

, the first and greatest of this name, to his face.* St. Augustine, also, Bishop of Hippo, opposed in many instances the tenets of the Church of Rome at this period. The doctrine of Purgatory is one of those inventions which he combats; and in this he is supported by the high authority of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and Origen. The churches also, now comprised under the general denomination of the Greek Church—the several churches of Asia Minor—those of Syria subject to the patriarchate of Antioch—of Chaldea subject to that of Babylon—the churches of Egypt, of Abyssinia, of Armenia, and of Georgia, were utterly ignorant of the doctrine.

We have before referred to St. Augustine's exposition of the words upon which the Church of Rome founds her claim to supremacy, and which this great man explains as applicable to Jesus Christ alone, and the confession of him as the Messiah. But the Papists say he was in error; and their Cardinal Bellarmine condemns as well this opinion as that of the same Saint, respecting purgatory. This is the same author, who teaches, that if the Bishop of Rome call virtue vice and vice virtue it becomes so; and thus the Church of Rome would level the eternal barriers which God has placed between right and wrong, good and evil: thus, not only breaking the commandments of our Lord themselves, but teaching others so to do. The Papists unquestionably act wisely in thus lopping off the members of the Saints to suit their mutilated trunks to the Procrustian measure of their own calendar: they could not have done otherwise. Yet, wherefore, canonize the men who attack the very foundation upon which the Church of Rome is built? The reason is obvious: to impose on the credulous, and assume the honours conferred by names of high authority, required patience to detect the plunder, and courage to divest the plunderer of. In this century the Church of Rome was so far from being submitted to, as the mother and mistress of Churches, that Asucius, Patriarch of Constantinople, not only denied its su-

* Leo ad Gal. Epist. 77, 88.

periority, but excommunicated Felix, the Roman Bishop, erased his name out of the dyptics or roll of Bishops, and denied his being Pope.*

In the SIXTH century, Gregory, surnamed the Great, Bishop of Rome, refused the title of UNIVERSAL BISHOP, because, according to Gibbon, he had not authority to support it; but according to authors more partial to this pontiff, because he deemed it too proud a name. This prelate authorised the marriages of the priests. Yet the same Gregory sought to draw over the English to embrace the doctrines of the Church of Rome, or rather to submit to its supremacy; for which purpose Austin, the Monk, was sent into England.

In the SEVENTH century, about the year 609, Austin, who had obtained the See of Canterbury, took decisive steps to ensure this object. The British Church was, however, reluctant to stoop to the yoke of that of Rome, or bow to its supremacy. In consequence of this refusal eleven hundred of the firmest of the opponents of Austin's authority unarmed and unresisting were cruelly butchered and slain.† Notwithstanding these terrors with which the Church of Rome sought to establish itself in these countries, the English, with sullen reluctance, submitted to the degrading yoke in silence, or when more favourable moments presented, opposed and denied it.‡ It is but justice to the memory of Gregory to state that he never appears to have sanctioned the measures pursued by Austin, and that he was no longer in this world when the massacre we have related was perpetrated by his former legate.

Of the state of the Church of Rome in Gregory's days, his own testimony will give a tolerably correct, though no doubt a qualified idea: "The devil," says he, "so strongly fasteneth his teeth in the members of the Church, that unless by God's grace the provident company of the bishops join together, to resist him, he will soon destroy the whole flock of Christ." And again: "I speak it with tears, I tell it

* Baronius.—† Bede.—‡ Bede. Henry of Huntingdon, &c. &c.

“with sighs of heart, the order of Priesthood being fallen
“within it cannot stand long without.”* How far the pro-
vident company of bishops joined to loose the devil’s tooth
out of the members of the Church, or to fasten in their own,
the History of the Romish Church will unfold in its sequel.

The venerable Bede says, “Let it not be beheld without
“tears, in that it is worthy to be lamented, the state of the
“Church is grown worse and worse.”† Now this refers to
the Church of Rome, not the English Church, of the former
of which Bede was a member and a Saint, the Pope having
by fire and sword established his authority in England before
this period. Paul, the Deacon, also thus addresses the
Church at this time: “You have buried in contempt and
“oblivion the Word of God, you have made his temple a
“den of thieves,” and instead of sweet melody you resound
“blasphemies against God himself.”‡

Even Charlemagne, the protector and the dupe of the
Church of Rome, writes thus of it: “The Priests laying
“aside all sound and wholesome doctrine, and little regard-
“ing that of the Apostle: If an angel preach other doctrine
“let him be accursed, do transgress the commandments of
“the Fathers, and bring into the Church such doctrine as
“was never known to Christ and his Apostles.”§

On the death of Gregory, Sabinian was chosen to succeed
him: his pontificate was short, having survived his election
but about eighteen months, and thus opened the way for the
elevation of Boniface the 3d., who, after his accession to the
pontifical chair, assumed the first of the Roman bishops, the
title of Universal, and thus gave occasion to Protestant
writers to recognize in him the perfect revelation of the Man
of Sin. Of the corruption of the Church of Rome at this
period no doubt can be entertained; the circumstances which
preceded his election we shall take a cursory view of.

The public virtue, which had laid the foundation of the

* Book 4. Ep. 26.—† Bede, lib. 4. cap. 2. p. 30.—‡ Wolph, torn. 1. p. 203.,

§ Carlo. Magno de Imag.

Roman greatness, and which had been gradually expiring through the line of the Emperors, was long since extinct, and even the sense of honour, which is considered as the securest pillar of Monarchy, was sharing the fate of its nobler predecessor, ere Boniface filled the papal chair. Military subordination had been rapidly on the decline since the death of the great the injured Belisarius, and the Emperors of Constantinople had evinced a perverted inclination to exchange the active duties of Sovereignty for the idle contests of polemical controversy. Exceptions there were even at this period to this charge, but such was the character which began to mingle with the more requisite qualifications of a Roman Emperor.

If at any time the Emperor was roused to exertion, worthy of the Roman name, it was only when stimulated to it by the apprehension of immediate danger, from which the morbid frame sank back with increased exhaustion, evincing even by the greatness of the effort, that it was but the convulsion of a giant, that hastened in endeavouring to prolong the hour of his dissolution.

The virtues of Tiberius the 2d. were inadequate to infuse new health and vigour into the corrupted mass of the unwieldy Empire of Rome. No bond of union or of common interest seems to have held it together; and a short reign of four years, distinguished principally by the personal character of the Sovereign, could confer no permanent benefit.

To Tiberius succeeded Maurice to whom the Empire was transmitted as a legacy to his merits, but which proved in the sequel the most unfortunate of bequests. The military virtues of Maurice were of the most respectable order, and he had the honour and the good fortune of restoring the Persian Monarch to his throne. But he was inadequate to protect his own dominions, or establish discipline in the ranks of his own legions.

Italy was ravaged by the barbarians: but at this period Rome found the qualifications of a Monarch in her Bishop. And while circumstances created him such in effect, Gregory

had the art to direct those circumstances to the aggrandizement of the Roman See. Such, in fine, was the prudence with which he filled the double character of Prince and Priest, that, as events should prove, he might either appear to have been acting the part of an independent Sovereign, or of the faithful steward of his Imperial Master.

In his character of pontiff, he appears to have been governed by the most distinguished moderation and firmness. He alike declined the title of **UNIVERSAL BISHOP** for himself, and refused to concede it to the Metropolitan of Constantinople. It is, indeed, asserted that this title he was too feeble to assume,* but we are disposed to attribute his conduct to a more generous motive. The Churches of the East would no doubt have refused him the proud distinction, but Italy and a large portion of the Western Churches would have bestowed on him the title by acclamation.

Having willingly paid to Gregory this tribute of our admiration, we must now enquire into his character in the professed capacity of a Minister of the Gospel, and a successor of the Apostles. Gregory must then, in this view, either have been the slave of superstition himself, or more culpably lent himself to impose its fetters upon others. The stories of ghosts, miracles, and resurrections which he recorded, or framed and gave currency to, are so numerous and so extravagant, that it is difficult to reconcile his belief of them with the good sense which otherwise distinguished him: or the wilful imposition of such puerile fictions, with that integrity we should wish to ascribe to his general character.—We are induced to make the former election.

The history of the human mind may convince us, that once a door is opened to the entrance of credulity, no barrier of intellect is adequate to resist its progress; nay, those very qualifications which would seem to have been an insuperable obstacle to its admittance, accelerate its course when once received, and display an ingenuity in support of the most ab-

surd hypotheses, worthy of a more rational and useful subject.

Our adoption of this opinion is supported from the consideration of the amazing zeal and industry of Gregory, which impelled him, amidst all his important avocations, to form a liturgy for the Roman Church of voluminous magnitude, and which has occasioned the pointed observation, that while the Lord's prayer consisted of but half-a-dozen lines the *Sacramentarius* of Gregory fills 880 folio pages. Were the full force of this remark felt, it would lighten the world of many of those ponderous tomes of divinity, beneath which the shelves of our libraries are still destined to groan.

This unfortunate propensity of Gregory, undoubtedly tended to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel, and to give, by the weight of his authority, a sanction to error and superstition. As a Sovereign we would be disposed to concede Gregory the character of a Patriot King.

One circumstance, however, we must relate which deducts somewhat from the reverence which we should otherwise pay Gregory in this character. The Emperor Maurice was supposed to have occasioned the massacre of twelve thousand of his subjects, prisoners in the hands of the Chagans, by his parsimony in refusing to ransom them for the trifling sum of six thousand pieces of gold. The charge seems altogether improbable: if he delayed to carry into immediate effect the terms of the proposal, it is the utmost extent that the accusation against a Prince, whose virtues alone obtained him the empire, will bear: but Maurice had rendered himself obnoxious to the army by attempting to restore its discipline, and the guilt of rebellion was willing to shelter itself beneath the imputed crime of the prince. Indignant at the massacre of his unfortunate subjects, Maurice issued orders to the army to enter the territory of the enemy and avenge the murder of their fellow-countrymen and soldiers. The order but fanned into flame the mutiny, and the army in place of penetrating into the provinces of the enemy, returned to the walls of Constantinople under the command of a Centurion the

destined successor of the hapless Maurice. So obscure, says the historian, had been the former condition of Phocas, that the Emperor was ignorant of the character and even name of his rival ; but as soon as he learned that the Centurion though bold in sedition was timid in the face of danger, "Alas !" said the desponding prince, "if he is a coward he will surely be a murderer."

It is painful to humanity to record or to repeat the wanton cruelties which, with malignant pleasure, man can exercise on fallen man. As the monarch walked barefoot in a religious procession, perhaps deprecating the fate which awaited him, he was pelted with stones and his person with difficulty protected by his guards. A fanatic monk ran through the streets with a drawn sword denouncing against him, though unconvicted of any crime, the wrath of God, while a vile plebeian, who represented his countenance and apparel, was seated on an ass and pursued by the imprecations of the multitude. He refused yet to fly before the successful usurper, patiently waited the event of the revolution, and addressed a fervent and public prayer to the Almighty, that the punishment of his sins might be inflicted in this world rather than in a future life :* a prayer that we trust was answered agreeable to his hopes.

Maurice had abdicated a crown he could no longer retain, and the Centurion, Phocas, ascended the throne of a long succession of legitimate Soverigns. But a living emperor is a dreaded if not a dangerous rival in the eyes of a usurper : the unfortunate Monarch was dragged from his retirement : his five sons were successively butchered before his eyes, while at each stroke that fell upon his heart the agonized father loudly exclaimed, "Thou art just O Lord ! and thy judgments are righteous."

Such, to the last, was the rigid attachment of this virtuous but most unfortunate Prince to truth and justice, that he revealed the pious fraud of a mother who, moved by his complicated sorrows, presented her own child in the place of a

royal infant. The murder of Maurice himself closed the scene.

The assassin was consecrated Emperor by the Patriarch of Constantinople, in the Church of St. John the Baptist, *as soon as the orthodoxy of his Creed was ascertained*, to such a depth of infamy was already sunk the profession of the Christian name. But it is with Gregory we have to do. As a subject and a christian, it was the duty of the Bishop of Rome, as the historian justly observes, to acquiesce in the established government, but Gregory saluted with "joyful applause" the fortunes of the assassin, and thus sullied with indelible disgrace the character of the Saint.

Ere Phocas himself met that fate which awaited him, and which he must have met without the same consolatory hopes which supported his predecessor, Gregory was no more. Sabinian, as we have related, soon followed him; and from the hands of the Centurion Phocas, from the hands of the murderer of his Sovereign, Boniface the 3d. was destined to receive the long coveted title of UNIVERSAL BISHOP. The foundation of papal dominion had been laid by Gregory, but the structure of supremacy achieved by Boniface, at first but an empty title, soon rose into an edifice that was to overshadow the whole earth.

We have thus endeavoured without prejudice to trace the gradual, the natural steps by which one Church obtained a superiority over its fellows, and the circumstances which led to that supremacy becoming the *alleged inheritance* of the Church of Rome. These steps may be resolved into three principal ones: The FIRST of the bishops or presbyters over the heads of their brethren: The SECOND the precedence assumed by the presiding Bishops of the Provincial Synods: The THIRD and last, the tremendous stride which placed the Metropolitan at an immeasurable distance from his former equals, and left him without a competition.

The year 606 witnessed the elevation of Boniface to the See of Rome, the gratification of his ambition in the title of Universal Bishop, and his death. The sketch which we have

drawn is derived from various authors, how far it is confirmed in its general outlines may be gathered from the summary which we shall here transcribe from the elegant historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

"It has been remarked," says he, "with more ingenuity than truth, that the virgin purity of the Church was never violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ. We may observe with much more propriety, that during that period, the disciples of the Messiah were indulged in a freer latitude both of faith and practice, than has ever been allowed in succeeding ages. As the terms of communion were insensibly narrowed, and the *spiritual authority of the prevailing party was exercised with encreasing severity*, many of its most respectable adherents, who were called upon to renounce, were provoked to assert their private opinions, to pursue the consequences of their mistaken principles, and openly to erect the standard of rebellion against the unity of the Church."

So much for the *cause* of errors in *doctrine* which took rise in the earlier Church, and the *consequences* of which still continue in all their sad operation. We shall now repeat the observations which relate to those of the *discipline*.

"The government of the Church has often been the subject as well as the prize of religious contention. The hostile disputants of Rome, of Paris, of Oxford, and of Geneva, have alike studied to reduce the primitive and apostolic model, to the respective standards of their own policy. The few who have pursued this enquiry with more candour and impartiality, are of opinion, that the apostles declined the office of legislation, and rather chose to endure some partial scandals and divisions, than to exclude the Christians of a future age, from the liberty of varying their forms of ecclesiastical government, according to the changes of times and circumstances. The ~~scheme of~~ policy, which, under their approbation, was adopted for the use of the FIRST CENTURY, may be discovered from the practice of Jerusalem, of Ephesus,

or of Corinth. The Societies which were instituted in the Cities of the Roman Empire, were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. The want of discipline and human learning was supplied by the occasional assistance of the prophets, who were called to that function, without distinction of age, of sex, or of natural abilities, and who, as often as they felt the divine impulse, poured forth the effusions of the spirit in the assembly of the faithful. But these extraordinary gifts were frequently abused or misapplied by the prophetic teachers:— they displayed them at an improper season, presumptuously disturbed the service of the assembly, and by their pride or mistaken zeal introduced, particularly into the Apostolic Church of Corinth, a long and melancholy train of disorders. As the institution of prophets became useless, and even pernicious, their powers were withdrawn, and their office abolished. The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the Church, the *Bishops*, and the *Presbyters*; two appellations, which in their origin, appear to have distinguished the same office, and the same order of persons.— The name of Presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of Bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of christians who were committed to their pastoral care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these *Episcopal Presbyters* guided each infant congregation with equal authority, and with united counsels.”

“ But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate: and the order of public deliberations soon introduced the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions of the assembly. A regard for the public tranquillity, which would have been so frequently interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive christians to constitute an honourable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest

and most holy among their presbyters to execute during his life the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that *the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of Presbyter*; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president. The advantages of this episcopal form of government, which appears to have been introduced before the end of the first century, were so obvious, and so important for the future greatness as well as the present peace of christianity, that it was adopted without delay by all the societies which were already scattered over the empire, had acquired in a very early period the sanction of antiquity, and is still revered by the most powerful churches, both of the East and of the West, as a primitive and even as a divine establishment. It is needless to observe, that the pious and humble presbyters, who were first dignified with the episcopal title, could not possess, and would probably have rejected, the power and the pomp which now encircles the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. But we may define in a few words the narrow limits of their original jurisdiction, which was chiefly of a spiritual, though in some instances of a temporal nature. It consisted in the administration of the sacraments and discipline of the Church; the superintendence of religious ceremonies, *which imperceptibly increased in number and variety*; the consecration of ecclesiastical ministers, to whom the bishop assigned their respective functions; the management of the public fund; and, the determination of all such differences as the faithful were unwilling to expose before the tribunal of an idolatrous judge. These powers, during a short period, were exercised according to the advice of the *Presbyterial College*, and with the consent and approbation of the assembly of Christians. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first of their equals, and the honourable servants of a free people. Wherever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters

by the suffrage of the *whole congregation*, every member of which supposed himself invested with a sacred and sacerdotal character."

"Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed more than an hundred years after the death of the Apostles. *Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic*: and although the most distant of their little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not as yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. As the numbers of the faithful were gradually multiplied, they discovered the advantages that might result from a closer union of their interests and designs. Towards the end of the SECOND CENTURY, the Churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of Provincial Synods, and they may justly be supposed to have borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country, the Amphictyons, the Achean league, or the assemblies of the Ionian cities. It was soon established as a custom and as a law, that the Bishops of the independent Churches should meet in the Capital of the provinces, at the stated periods of Spring and Autumn. Their deliberations were assisted by the advice of a few distinguished presbyters, and moderated by the presence of a listening multitude. Their decrees, which were styled canon, regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline; and it was natural to believe that a liberal effusion of the Holy Spirit would be poured on the united assembly of the delegates of the Christian people. The institution of Synods was so well *suited to private ambition* and to public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings; and the Catholic Church soon assumed the form, of A GREAT FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC."

As the legislative authority of the particular churches was

insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the *bishops* obtained by their alliance a much larger share of executive and *arbitrary power*; and, as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to *attack* with united vigour, *the original rights of their clergy and people*. The *prelates* of the THIRD CENTURY imperceptibly *changed the language of exhortation into that of command*, scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and supplied, by *Scripture allegories and declamatory rhetoric*, their deficiency of force and reason. They exalted the unity and power of the Church, as it was represented in the EPISCOPAL OFFICE, of which every Bishop enjoyed an equal and individual portion. Princes and Magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion: it was the *episcopal authority* alone which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this and over another world. The BISHOPS were the VICEGERENTS OF CHRIST, the SUCCESSORS OF THE APOSTLES, and the mystic substitutes of the High Priests of the Mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character, *invaded the freedom of clerical and popular elections*; and if, in the administration of the Church, they still consulted the judgment of the presbyters, or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a *voluntary condescension*. The Bishops acknowledged the supreme authority which resided in the assembly of their brethren; but, in the government of his peculiar diocese, each of them exacted from *his flock* the same implicit obedience, as if that favourite metaphor had been literally just, and as if the *shepherd* had been of a more exalted nature than that of his sheep. This obedience, however, was not imposed without some efforts on the one side, and some resistance on the other. The democratical part of the constitution was, in many places, very warmly supported by the zealous or interested opposition of the inferior clergy. But their patriotism received the ignominious epithets of *faction and schism*; and the episcopal cause was indebted for its rapid progress to the labours of active prelates, who

like Cyprian of Carthage, could reconcile the arts of the most ambitious statesman, with the christian virtues which seem adapted to the character of a saint and a martyr.

“THE SAME CAUSE WHICH AT FIRST HAD DESTROYED THE EQUALITY OF THE PRESBYTERS, introduced among the bishops a PRE-EMINENCE OF RANK, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as, in the spring and autumn, they met in provincial synod, the difference of personal merit and reputation was very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. But the order of public proceedings required a more regular and less invidious distinction; the office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province, was conferred on the bishops of the principal city, and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty title of METROPOLITANS and PRIMATES, secretly prepared to *usurp* over their episcopal brethren the same authority which *they* had so lately assumed above the College of Presbyters. Nor was it long before an emulation of *pre-eminence and power* prevailed among THE METROPOLITANS THEMSELVES, each of them affecting to display, in the most pompous terms, the temporal honours and advantages of the city over which *he* presided; the number and opulence of the Christians who were subject to his pastoral care; the saints and martyrs who had risen amongst them; and, the purity with which they preserved the tradition of the faith, as it had been transmitted through a series of orthodox bishops from the apostles, or the apostolic disciple, to whom the foundation of their church was ascribed. From every cause either of a civil or of an ecclesiastical nature, it was easy to foresee that ROME must enjoy the respect, and would soon *claim* the obedience of the provinces. The society of the faithful bore a just proportion to the capital of the empire; and the Roman Church was the greatest, the most numerous, and, in regard to the West, the most ancient of all the Christian establishments, many of which had received their religion from the pious labours of her missionaries. Instead of ONE

apostolic founder, the utmost boast of Antioch, of Ephesus, or of Corinth; the banks of the Tyber were supposed to have been honoured with the preaching and martyrdom of the two most eminent among the apostles; and the bishops of Rome very prudently claimed the inheritance of whatsoever prerogatives were attributed either to the person or to the office of St. Peter. The bishops of Italy and of the provinces were disposed to allow them a *primacy of order and association*, such was their very accurate expression, in the Christian aristocracy. But the power of a monarch was rejected with abhorrence, and the aspiring genius of Rome experienced from the nations of Asia and Africa a more vigorous resistance to her spiritual, than she had formerly done to her temporal dominion. The patriotic Cyprian, who ruled with the most absolute sway the church of Carthage and the provincial Synods, opposed with resolution and success the ambition of the Roman Pontiff, artfully connected his own cause with that of the Eastern bishops, and, like Hannibal, sought out new allies in the heart of Asia. If this Punic war was carried on without any effusion of blood, it was owing much less to the moderation than to the weakness of the contending prelates. Invectives and excommunications were their only weapons; and these, during the progress of the whole controversy, they hurled against each other with equal fury and devotion. The hard necessity of censuring either a Pope, or a Saint and a Martyr, distresses the modern Catholics, whenever they are obliged to relate the particulars of a dispute, in which the champions of religion indulged such passions as seem much more adapted to the senate or the camp.

“The progress of the ecclesiastical authority gave birth to the memorable distinction of the LAITY and the CLERGY, which had been unknown to the Greeks and Romans. The former of these appellations comprehended the body of the Christian people; the latter, according to the signification of the word, was appropriated to the chosen portion that had been set apart for the service of religion; a celebrated order

of men, which has furnished the most important, though not always the most edifying, subject for modern history. Their mutual hostilities sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church, but their zeal and activity were united in the common cause, and the love of power, which, under the most artful disguises, could insinuate itself into the breasts of bishops and martyrs, animated them to encrease the number of their subjects, and to enlarge the limits of the Christian empire."

We apprehend this sketch, which we were unwilling to circumscribe, will convey a pretty adequate idea of the steps by which supremacy came to assert and establish itself in the Metropolitan Church of Rome, and we trust it will carry conviction to every unprejudiced mind, of the very slight foundation upon which that church would build her claim to superiority in the alleged authority of Scripture, or practice of the primitive church. We could multiply proofs in abundance in support of the views above taken, but shall confine ourselves here to a few extracts from the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical historian Du Pin. In his "Abridgment of the Doctrine of the Church" during the three first centuries, he thus expresses himself: "The doctrine of the True Church was always the same and will be ever so to the end of the world: for, it is utterly impossible that the True Church should cease to be, or that the True Church should not teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ, because if she should teach a doctrine different from that of Jesus Christ, or if she should not teach the doctrine of our blessed Saviour, in both these cases she would cease to be the True Church." So that it depended on the doctrine taught, whether it were conformable to that of Jesus Christ or otherwise, to determine the Church's character, and not whether it was preached in conformity to the dogmas of any particular Church, as of Rome, Ephesus, or Corinth, for we find that every such church was liable to error. Again, we are told that "They," the primitive Churches, "believed the Holy Scriptures to be written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that they

“ contained all the principal articles of faith : that though
 “ they are obscure in some places, they are clear enough in
 “ many others, and that even their obscurity has its use.”
 That the primitive churches “ sometimes cited the Apocryphal
 “ books, but never reckoned them among the canonical Scrip-
 “ tures.” Of the Discipline, the same author observes: “ It
 “ was plain and simple, and had scarce any other splendour to
 “ recommend it, but that which the holiness of the manners and
 “ lives of the Christians gave it. They assembled every Sun-
 “ day, in particular, in certain places appointed and set apart
 “ for public devotions. The bishop, or, in his absence, the
 “ minister, presided in the congregation, where they read the
 “ Holy Scriptures, and oftentimes the bishops preached the
 “ word of God.” On the whole a greater contrast can scarcely
 be conceived than that which the primitive Church presents
 in its doctrine and practice, with that which characterises the
 Church of Rome at the present day. We shall here set
 down a few of those circumstances in which the Primitive
 Church and the Church of Rome are especially opposed to
 each other.

THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

1. In the Primitive Church great simplicity of faith and doctrine existed, a sincere belief in the Lord Jesus Christ was the terms of salvation required.*
2. The Christian Church in the first ages formed ONE GREAT REPUBLIC: the individuals of each separate Church or Society of Believers were perfectly equal, and those Churches were all independent one of the other.†
3. The Primitive Church asserted and maintained, with irresistible force and argument, the right and reasonableness of PRIVATE JUDGMENT.‡

* Du Pin. † Tertulian. ‡ Origen.

THE CHURCH OF ROME.

1. In the Church of Rome a complexity of doctrine was established, with refinements and distinctions altogether remote from the simplicity of the Gospel.
2. The Church of Rome through the authority of the Emperors usurped pre-eminence over many of these Churches, and established in place of a Free Republic ONE UNQUALIFIED DESPOTISM.
3. The Church of Rome denies the right of PRIVATE JUDGMENT, of course removes the only grounds upon which a rational being should build his faith, and thus levels the Christian

4. The Church of the three first centuries never admitted, nor once thought of admitting, a pretended infallibility, but "had prodigious respect for the decisions of Councils, and the opinion of the UNIVERSAL CHURCH, that is to say, of ALL THE CHURCHES IN THE WORLD."*
5. The Christians of the first ages of the Church would not take the life of a fellow creature even in self-defence.†
6. The Primitive Church professed that its kingdom was *not* of this world, and its members were distinguished by humility, charity, and patience.‡
- * Du Pin. † Eusebius. ‡ The Gospel.
‡ Du Pin, &c.
- Doctrines with the Creed of Mahomet, making the sword or the stake, not the understanding, the arbiter of truth.
4. The Church of Rome claims infallibility, and has shed streams of blood to establish this absurd pretension; requires its decrees to be received without questioning them, and holds an appeal to the UNIVERSAL CHURCH to be rebellion and a declaration of war.
5. The Church of Rome gloried in shedding the blood of those whose innocence it acknowledged in every respect, but that of differing from it in their dogmas and denying its supremacy: nay, sanctioned often indiscriminate massacre.
6. The Church of Rome asserts that its kingdom is of this world, and that to it belongs the right to bestow or to take away crowns; and it is distinguished by pride, a spirit of hatred, and of intolerance.

As the principles and conduct we have attributed to the Church of Rome are avowed and historical truths, a reference to the several authorities would be impertinent: should any of the allegations respecting this Church be disputed, full and adequate proofs can at once be adduced in support of the charges here made. Not to go farther back, with respect to the most important of these charges, the "denial of the right of private judgment," and the "acknowledgment of the Church of Rome being an Intolerant Church," we have only to refer to the discussions at the Carlow Bible Meeting in confirmation of the one: to the other Bishop Doyle has pleaded "guilty."

While, therefore, WE are the friends and advocates of UN-
 RESTRICTED RELIGIOUS TOLERATION and LIBERTY OF
 THOUGHT, we caution and entreat all who value these ines-
 timable privileges, to consider how they entrust the smallest
 particle of POLITICAL POWER to those who deny the RIGHT
 OF THOUGHT to be the INESTIMABLE PRIVILEGE OF EVERY
 ENGLISHMAN.

Our *object* is not to apologise for every particular in the
 form of the ESTABLISHED CHURCH : but, recollect, that THIS
 CHURCH recognizes the RIGHT which we contend for. What-
 ever is VALUABLE in its Constitution IS ITS OWN : whatever
 is CONDEMNABLE in it, it derives from

THE CHURCH OF ROME!!!